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BERLIN, 29 décembre.

S'il est vrai, monsieur, que vous ayez quelque manuscrit sous mon nom, soit une ancienne lettre écrite à monsieur König, soit un détail d'expériences de physique, intitulé *Séance* etc., je vous prie avec la plus vive instance de ne les point imprimer. Je vous paierai ce que vous voudrez et je vous dédommagerai de plus d'une manière. Vous y pouvez compter et je me flatte que vous aurez égard aux prières de Mr. König et aux miennes. Je vous aurai une obligation extrême et suis parfaitement, monsieur,

Votre très humble et très  
obéissant serviteur

VOLTAIRE.

This letter, if not of prime importance, is interesting in that it probably is, so far as we can judge, an echo of the famous quarrel between the German mathematician, Samuel König, and Maupertuis. It will be recalled that a dispute had arisen between König and Maupertuis, President of Frederick's Academy, over a problem of physics. Voltaire took part in the dispute with the celebrated *Diatribe du Docteur Akakia*, which earned him the keen displeasure of his royal patron. This satire was published in 1752.<sup>2</sup>

König, at one time the secretary and teacher of Mme du Châtelet, had gone, in 1749, to La Haye, as professor of mathematics and philosophy. Voltaire left Berlin March 26, 1753. It seems to me that Voltaire's letter was probably written in December, 1752. The *Diatribe* was finished in October, 1752. The first edition, published that month in Potsdam, was burned about the end of November, by the orders of Frederick. Again printed at Leyden (Luzac), all the copies sent to Germany were seized and burned, December 24.

The letter to Gosse would be explained by Voltaire's evident anxiety to recover a certain compromising document whose publication would aggravate the already bitter feelings of Frederick. The reference to "un détail d'expériences intitulé *Séance* etc.,"—Voltaire himself was undecided as to the nature of the manuscript—may point to the eight-page *Séance mémorable* written upon the occasion of the same quarrel, though not published at once.<sup>3</sup> Voltaire's "instance" betokens an anxiety produced by an event out of the ordinary, and it may well be laid to the cause mentioned.

SHIRLEY GALE PATTERSON.

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<sup>2</sup> Bengesco, *Bibliographie*, II, 63.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 64.

# A NOTE ON "AN ENGLISH FRIEND OF CHARLES OF ORLÉANS"

To the Editors of *Mod. Lang. Notes*.

SIRS:—A variant to No. XIV of the English ballades printed in my article with the above title (*Pub. Mod. Lang. Ass.*, XXVI, 1, p. 165) is to be found in ms. Lambeth 306, leaf 137. It has been printed by Dr. Furnivall (*Pol. Rel. and Love Poems*, E. E. T. S. 15, re-ed., p. 68). The ballade has been considerably altered in the Lambeth text, each stanza being expanded from the seven-line to the eight-line ballade. A notable change is the alteration of the dating, December 5 in the original ballade (line 21) to an indefinite date, suitable for any lover's use.

Accompanying this ballade in ms. Lambeth 306 are three other ballades, which resemble closely the ballade under consideration. It is not impossible that these represent a similar reworking by a later hand, of ballades by the friend of Orléans.

H. N. MACCRACKEN.

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## A NOTE ON MUSSET

To the Editors of *Mod. Lang. Notes*.

SIRS:—In perhaps the finest emotional passage of Musset's *Nuit de Décembre*, occur the following lines:

Ah ! faible femme, orgueilleuse insensée,  
Malgré toi, tu t'en souviendras !  
Pourquoi, grand Dieu ! mentir à sa pensée ?  
Pourquoi ces pleurs, cette gorge oppressée,  
Ces sanglots, si tu n'aimais pas ?

In these lines, Musset has followed pretty closely a much less well known poem, *A Laure*, published three years earlier, as will appear from comparison:

Si tu ne m'aimais pas, dis-moi, fille insensée,  
Que balbutiais-tu dans ces fatales nuits ?  
Exerçais-tu ta langue à railler ta pensée ?  
Que voulaient donc ces pleurs, cette gorge oppressée,  
Ces sanglots et ces cris ?

It will be seen that in these two five-line passages, three essential words, *insensée*, *pleurs*, *sanglots*, and one phrase, *cette gorge oppressée*, are absolutely identical; one hemistich, *Si tu*

*ne m'aimais pas*, is almost identical; the meaning of *Pourquoi* and of *Que voulaient donc*, in the fourth line, is practically the same; and the meaning of the third line in both cases is very similar.

Whether the heroine of *la Nuit de Décembre* be George Sand, "Laure," or another love, it is evident that Musset, consciously or unconsciously, has imitated his earlier poem.

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#### RICHARD BRATHWAITE'S *Mercurius Britannicus*

*To the Editors of Mod. Lang. Notes.*

SIRS:—In my recent note (*Mod. Lang. Notes*, xvi, 233 f.) on Brathwaite's *Mercurius Britannicus*, I stated that in the records of the trial of the Ship Money Case I could find no reference to "Puny Baron Page, alias Baron Telclock," although the marginal note identifying him with the character "Gliciscus Horologus" seemed to be correct. My colleague, Professor Charles H. Hull, calls my attention to the fact that Edward Foss, in *The Judges of England*, vi, 352, refers to a Baron Page, who was Cursitor Baron of the Exchequer from 1638 until his death in 1642. Very little more than this is known of him. Foss says: "Dugdale calls this baron William, and Rymer christens him John; and which is the real name has not been discovered." Unfortunately the reference to him in *Mercurius Britannicus* does not settle the question. "That he was a cursitor baron," continues Foss, "there is no doubt, for he is never mentioned in the judicial proceedings of the court." This is thoroughly in keeping with the treatment accorded him by Brathwaite:

"*Gloris* [= Latin for 'dormouse,' an animal proverbially sleepy], Judge *Dormant* [observe the pun, *dormouse-dormire*], you know whom I meane, hee that sits for a sipher on the Bench, the barren Baron that hath little wit, and lesse honesty, because he was your tell-Clock [= a lazy person], (ô yee purple Iudges)."

JOSEPH QUINCY ADAMS, JR.

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#### BRIEF MENTION

*A Shakespeare Glossary*, by C. T. Onions (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1911) is a companion-volume to the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* and might also like it have been described on the title-page as "adapted from the *Oxford Dictionary*;" but that is what is meant by Mr. Onions's occupational title, "Of the Oxford English Dictionary," which is so closely followed by the opening words of his preface, declaring the book to be "primarily the outcome of an analysis of Shakespeare's vocabulary conducted in the light of the results published in the Dictionary." But the modifier "primarily" is here used with strict regard to facts that are carefully recited by Mr. Onions. This is important, for otherwise it might have been supposed that there has been "a mere mechanical transference" of material from the large work "with small expenditure of time and labour." It should, therefore, be duly considered (a) that when the Delegates of the Press authorized the preparation and publication of this book, the compiler had to his credit "fifteen years' experience on the editorial staff of the Dictionary;" and (b) that "the full working days of a year and a half" were then expended on the task, which was considered by the compiler to be "one of difficulty and delicacy," with "pitfalls even for the expert." The work "comprises close upon ten thousand separate articles," in a handy and cheap volume. The glossaries that usually accompany separately edited plays are little better than make-shifts in comparison with this compilation, which gives a complete view of Shakespeare's vocabulary and idioms, and enables the student to profit by such excellent advice as the following: "He will do well from time to time to examine the articles in the glossary, especially the longer ones and those concerned with words of Latin origin, apart from the . . . text; he will in this way discover how much he is in danger of missing or misunderstanding," and will gradually be quickened to a finer "appreciation of the richness and subtlety of Elizabethan English." And the commonest native words must